

COST OF CURRENT MEDICAL GERMAN PERIODICALS

Fellows of the Academy probably know from personal experience that the present price of most German medical literature is very high indeed. Possibly they do not realize how disproportionately exorbitant is its cost compared with that of the other language groups. The publishing firm of Julius Springer is by far the worst offender in this direction. An excerpt from a letter from Mr. Donald Gilchrist, Librarian of the University of Rochester, addressed to a society of German publishers, November 16, 1932, puts the situation graphically :

" . . . Attached you will find a list of some Medical Library subscriptions to scientific journals, all of which are costing us more than fifty dollars per year per title. The total of these medical journal subscriptions is nearly \$2500, and represents 40% of what we pay for 362 subscriptions. Last year we paid \$6100 for 362 annual subscriptions, an average cost of \$16.85. For these 29 German subscriptions we paid \$2460, average cost, \$85.00. For the 333 other subscriptions, we paid \$3,640, average cost, \$10.90.

Now, I am not arguing that the cost per page is the important item. On that basis the German publications are not so bad; they might even show up unfavorably without affecting my complaint. My complaint is specifically this: When we subscribe to one of these German publications, we do not know what our bill will be. Volumes are issued when enough material is gathered, the number of volumes to be issued a year is indefinite, the price per volume varies; and having subscribed, we are totally at the mercy of the publishers. Our professors in the Medical School tell us that many of these publications are cluttered with insignificant case reports, fragmentary experimental work, and wholly unimportant papers. In other words, the editorship, in many cases, is very bad. We have to accept a subscription to the whole, or pay the penalty of missing the really significant articles which all of them contain in varying quantities.

As you know, this matter is now being given very serious consideration by a group of medical libraries in the United States. Complaints on exactly this point have been going to Germany for years, without being given any particular consideration. It is my own personal opinion that medicine in the United States is now sufficiently matured to stand pretty much on its own feet, and I, for one, am quite ready to join with other American libraries in reducing radically the number of our expensive subscriptions,

until the situation is remedied; until we can subscribe on an annual basis specified in dollars, for well-edited journals publishing only the more significant material. If your association will give some serious attention to this problem, and put these publications on a similar basis with the important journals in these fields in other countries, you may make a real contribution toward friendly, effective scientific relations between your country and ours.

The economic situation in institutions at the present time is such that many library subscription lists will have to be radically pruned; and you may be sure that the attached list will be given immediate and serious consideration, when library committees are faced with the necessity of dropping eight to fourteen average English, American, French, Italian, or Scandinavian journals in order to subscribe to one German journal; for example, *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Neurologie*, at \$157.00 per year."

In 1932, the Academy spent \$5,830 for 334 German subscriptions. The cost of its totals subscriptions was \$9,562. We therefore paid 60% of our magazine funds for 30% of our journals, which is obviously not a fair division.

Medical libraries and general libraries, in Germany as well as elsewhere, have been aware of this discrepancy for some years. Many protests have been voiced. The Medical Library Association and the American Library Association both have committees coöperating on the problem at present. They urge all individuals who are in any way concerned with these conditions to investigate the situation in their own fields and to register their personal protests with the offending publishers, or with the Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft M. B. H., Markgrafenstrasse 6, Leipzig C 1, Germany.

JANET DOE.